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Message from the Commander

Programs

Last month we discussed being involved with our Communities. Now we will look at what Programs we should be working within our Posts. There is no list that will be pushed down from National, Department, or your District on what programs will work in your Post. You must look at three things to determine the answer. Each Post needs to look at what they have historically done, what needs their community has, and what passions their members have. Remember, Programs that work in Houston, may not work in Wichita Falls. This needs to be a Post-by-Post decision, and it may change over time.



The first look needs to be at the history and traditions of each Post. Once you look at what your Post has been doing, it is easy to look at why they have done those specific programs. If a Post has a program that they do and do well, there may not be a need to change it. With all the programs in all The American Legion, almost everyone started at Post level. So, if you have a Program that is successful, positively impacts on the needs of the Community and expresses the passions of the Post, then keep doing that Program. If the historical Program does not meet those criteria, it may be time to relook at the use of the Post resources.

If there is a need to expand the Programs of the Post, then the first thing to look at is what are the needs in the local Community. What do the Veterans in the Community need, what do the Children and Youth in the Community need, review all the Community needs within our Four Pillars. Research the Programs of The American Legion that may solve the needs of the Community. If none of the Programs meet those needs, then solve the problem by starting a new Program. If it works, it will probably be replicated by other Posts, Departments, until it becomes the next National American Legion Program.

The next area to investigate is what are the passions of the Members of the Post. The most needed Program in a Community will not succeed, if the Members do not have a Passion to put into it. If the Members have a Passion for National Defense, and for Blood Drives, then that will be a Program that will succeed. While donating blood may be my Passion, it may not be yours. That is OK. Maybe your Community has a large Homeless Veterans population, and the Passion of the Post lies here. Then develop programs that satisfy this need. Listen to the Members of the Post and engage their Passions with the Programs that you choose to solve the needs of the Community.

Once a Post aligns the Programs of its history, the needs of the Community, and the Passion of its Members, there will be no stopping the success of these Programs. The only thing to remember now is to periodically review all three areas again. This is the true meaning to the term of Post Revitalization. We look forward to following the successes of all the Texas Posts over the next year. If your Post has questions or interest in any Program, let your District, your Division, and your Department supply you with the answers.

Danny Muth
Department Commander

**AMERICAN
LEGION**

BE THE ONE

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Building Better Posts with MOPA

A Bigger Legion Family Means Stronger Posts

By Ventura "Ace" Tounsel, MOPA Commission Chair, Department of Texas

The American Legion Family is changing, and with change comes opportunity.

At the 2026 American Legion National Convention, new gender neutral eligibility language was adopted for membership in the American Legion Auxiliary. Eligibility now includes qualifying grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses, and direct or adopted descendants within two degrees of consanguinity. This means many fathers, sons, brothers, grandfathers, and grandsons who previously could not qualify for Auxiliary membership may now be eligible.

You may be thinking, That's Auxiliary membership. What does that have to do with my Post? Potentially, quite a lot.

Auxiliary Units have their own leadership, governing documents, and responsibility for determining and verifying their membership. But we should never forget that we are members of one American Legion Family working toward a common mission.

From a MOPA perspective, this presents an opportunity to think about **Membership, Organization and Post Activities** together.

A stronger Unit can mean more volunteers supporting veterans, more people participating in Post activities, more families attending events, and a larger pool of people invested in the success of the entire Legion Family. Someone who first becomes involved through the Auxiliary may bring a Legion eligible veteran into our Post, or introduce another family member to the Sons of The American Legion.

There is also an interesting opportunity involving the S.A.L. National has confirmed that some individuals may now qualify for **both the Sons of The American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary**, and that such dual membership does not create a conflict of interest. SAL eligibility itself remains limited to qualifying male descendants, adopted sons, and stepsons.

This shouldn't become a competition over which organization gets a member.

Instead, let's ask a better question: **How can we introduce eligible families to everything the American Legion Family has to offer?**

Posts can help by educating Legionnaires about the change, encouraging family membership, including the entire Legion Family in activities, and ensuring that newcomers feel welcome regardless of which membership card they carry.

Membership growth isn't only about recruiting another Legionnaire. Sometimes it means bringing an entire family into our mission of serving veterans, military families, youth, and our communities.

MOPA Challenge: At your next Legion Family meeting, discuss the new Auxiliary eligibility requirements together. Then identify one way your Post, Unit, and Squadron can work together to welcome eligible families and strengthen participation across your entire Legion Family.

Building Better Posts isn't about doing more, it's about doing what matters most, together.

2026–2027 DEPARTMENT OFFICERS

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Bret Watson, National Executive Committeeman
Gene Toohey, Alternate National Executive Committeeman
Richard Huntley, Immediate Past Department Commander
William West, Department Adjutant
Jimmy Mitchell, Department Chaplain
Gary Sanders, Department Treasurer
William Wallace, Department Judge Advocate
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Hector Hernandez, Jr., 22nd District Commander
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ARTICLE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Do you have an article or news announcement to share with the rest of the Department of Texas? If so, please follow these guidelines for submissions.

- Submit text in Word format (.doc, .docx) or as a plain text file (.txt or .rtf). ONE ARTICLE PER EMAIL PLEASE.
- The ideal word count for our format is 200 - 500 words (maximum), with no double spacing.
- Give your article a TITLE! Create a HEADLINE and save with a proper file name so we can easily recognize it.
- Tell us who the author is, whether it's you or if you are just forwarding it to us.
- Attach any photos or artwork for your article separately in your email. DO NOT embed them in your Word or PDF file. Larger photos are best, and high resolution JPG files of 300 dpi or better are preferred. Please name these files accordingly so we can track them along with your article.
- Let us know in your e-mail or Word doc of any photo captions, the name of the photographer, etc. Please note that due to spacing and layout requirements, we might not be able to use every photo or caption submitted (preferably 2 - 3 photos per article).
- Please spell check everything! Especially people's names, web addresses, etc. We do our best to catch typos, and make corrections, but sometimes they still slip by. You can help us greatly by simply running the spell check function in your word processing software.
- We publish on our Website on the FIRST FRIDAY of the Month, with few exceptions. E-mail everything directly to times@txlegion.org by the 20th of every month, for it to appear in the following issue. Submissions received after the 20th will be considered, but may be held over or discarded due to space and layout restrictions.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and continue to help us grow and improve The Legion Times!

A Little Bit of History – DID YOU KNOW?

Submitted by Shirley Platt, Department of Texas Historian

1935 – DEDICATION OF THE MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

On April 30, 1935, Dr. William J. Danforth, chairman of the Memorial Highway Committee, Commander Ainsworth, and Robert O. Whitaker met with the Highway Commission in Austin to urge dedication of State Highway No. 66 as The American Legion Memorial Highway. The Legion proposed to obtain one hundred park sites along the highway, and in return for deeds to them, the Highway Department agreed to landscape and maintain them with the assistance of the posts along the route. Each park site was to be dedicated to a World War Division by a suitable marker carrying the Legion emblem and the donor's name.

The highway was dedicated on July 8, 1935. A motorcade of Legion and Auxiliary members, county commissioners, and members of the Highway Commission, led by Governor Allred, made a three-day tour of the highway. The 600-mile Memorial Highway extends from the Red River through the heart of Texas to the Rio Grande, crossing eighteen counties, and passing through areas rich in mining, agriculture and natural resources. Over one hundred roadside parks were provided along the right of way. It stands as a living memorial in honor of the men of Texas who made the supreme sacrifice in World War I.

Extracted from: The American Legion in Texas 1919-1949, Copyright 1951

The Shooters Corner: On the Line – In the Circle

Story by Past Department Vice Commander Tony Lopez,
State Junior Shooting Sports Program Chairman

CORPUS CHRISTI – (Oct. 1, 2026) – October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time to honor survivors, remember loved ones, and stand united in supporting all those affected by this disease. At the American Legion Junior Shooting Sports Program (JSSP), our commitment extends beyond marksmanship, safety, and leadership – we are dedicated to supporting the health, strength, and well-being of our community.

Precision, focus, and resilience are core values taught on the air rifle range, but they are equally vital in the fight against breast cancer. Just as young athletes learn discipline, perseverance, and goal-setting through target shooting, those fighting breast cancer – and the families standing beside them – demonstrate incredible courage every single day.

Throughout this month, we encourage our youth shooters, instructors, coaches, and American Legion family members and affiliates to wear pink on and off the range to show solidarity. Let's use this opportunity to advocate for early detection, spread life-saving awareness, and support ongoing research. Early detection saves lives, and regular screenings can make all the difference.

Together, The American Legion JSSP stands proud to champion both youth development and health awareness. Let's aim high, shoot straight, and honor the strength of survivors and fighters everywhere this October. Join us in spreading awareness and reminding everyone that no one fights alone!



Photo by Chet Strange, TAL



Fred Brock Post 828 Supports Highlands High School JROTC program

Story by Legionnaire Burrell Parmer, TEXALPA

SAN ANTONIO – (Sept. 15, 2026) – During the general membership meeting of Fred Brock American Legion Post 828, Post Commander Amanda Parham presented Highlands High School Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) Senior Instructor Col. Chris Wynder with a donation of \$750 through McTeacher's Night plus another \$100 donation from Post Sergeant-at-Arms Fernando Rover in support of the school's JROTC program.

McTeacher's Night is a school fundraiser held at a participating McDonald's, usually for a two-three hour period in the evening. During the designated hours, McDonald's donates a percentage of eligible sales back to the school.

Highlands High School JROTC was approved to participate in McTeacher's Night and needed a non-profit organization to be their sponsor. Naturally, the Senior JROTC Instructor, U.S. Army Col. Chris Wynder, reached out to Post 828 for that sponsorship.

On Aug. 25, Highlands JROTC and members of Post 828 took part in the fundraising event at a southside McDonalds resulting in the amount of \$750.

"Fred Brock American Legion Post 828 was proud to sponsor Highlands High School JROTC for McTeacher's Night because investing in our youth is an investment in the future of our community," said Parham. "These young cadets are developing leadership, discipline, citizenship, and a heart for service — values that closely align with the mission of The American Legion."

In addition to Highlands High School, the Post supports two other JROTC programs at Sam Houston and Breckenridge High Schools.

"As veterans, we have a responsibility not only to honor those who served before us, but also to encourage and mentor the young leaders who will serve our communities in the future," Parham said.

The American Legion is a strong supporter of Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) and ROTC programs across the country.



During the general membership meeting of Fred Brock American Legion Post 828, Post Commander Amanda Parham presented Highlands High School Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) Senior Instructor Col. Chris Wynder with a donation of \$750 through McTeacher's Night plus another \$100 donation from Post Sergeant-at-Arms Fernando Rover in support of the school's JROTC program (Photo by Legionnaire Marcellus Hutchinson)



Officers of Fred Brock American Legion Post 828 and Auxiliary Unit 828 with cadets of Highlands High School Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps in support of McTeacher's Night held at a southside McDonalds. The fundraising event raised \$750 in support of the school's JROTC program (Photo courtesy of Col. Chris Wynder)

Stephenville's Post 240 Unveils Lasting Tribute to Victims of Agent Orange

Submitted by Roger Easter, Past Post 240 Commander • Photos by Post 240 Historian Robin York



Turnbow Higgs American Legion Post 240 unveiled a solemn and enduring tribute during its August 2026 Third Tuesday Joint Meal Meeting, where Commander Frank Maddy presented a newly created Agent Orange Memorial Plaque. The plaque will be permanently mounted on the wall of the Post 240 Legion Hall as a reminder of the unseen costs of war — from the widespread defoliation campaigns in Vietnam to the Burn Pits of the Middle East. Its message is simple and sobering: War has unforeseen consequences.

This tribute was inspired by Legionnaire Dean Jones, a twenty-four year member of Post 240 and former U.S. Air Force Navigator/Bombardier of B 52D Crew 70, which completed 106 combat missions during the Vietnam War. In 1967, Dean and his entire crew were exposed to Agent Orange after being ferried between locations aboard a contaminated C 123 aircraft. Every member of that crew has since died from illnesses linked to toxic exposure — except Dean, who has been undergoing cancer treatment since 2022.

As the lone survivor of B 52D (56 0659), Dean's magnanimous gesture in memory of his fallen crew ensures their story will live on. His tribute now occupies a prominent place on the walls of Post 240, encouraging all who see it to "Pay It Forward," just as he has done.

Dean and his crew beat the odds by remaining together for three years and 106 missions — a rare achievement in the high risk world of B 52 operations. They also survived one of the most harrowing takeoff incidents ever recorded at Anderson AFB, Guam, a story documented in The Book, WE WERE CREWDOGS IV, "The Blown tire Incident."

Dean recounts with remarkable clarity; "We were scheduled for a 2:00 a.m. departure, Crew E-70 was the last aircraft in a nine plane wave. With 57,000 pounds of ordnance and three quarters fuel load, the B 52D required the entire runway. A north northeast breeze allowed take-off toward the six hundred foot cliff overlooking the Pacific. Just seconds after passing the point of no return, we heard a violent thump. Our pilot immediately announced, in a strained voice, "I have the airplane. We have had a blowout." The aircraft drifted toward the blown tire as the pilots fought to keep it centered. With the cliff approaching, both pilots hauled back on their control wheels. The aircraft pitched sharply upward and then began to sink over the cliff and out of view of ground observers. According to the gunner, our aircraft began to level out 50-100 feet above the ocean. At 5,000 feet, I inspected the wheel well and confirmed the right front truck had blown. Against all odds, our crew continued the mission and delivered the payload as planned."

The Tribute Plaque unveiling ceremony was worthy of CREW E-70 story. The ceremony honored not only Dean's service but the courage and sacrifice of his entire crew. The plaque stands as a testament to their endurance, their loyalty, and the unseen wounds carried home from war. Kudos to Post 240 Adjutant, Finance Officer, and 17th District Commander Chris Grantham who developed and produced the final memorial — a work of respect, craftsmanship, and historical fidelity.

Epilog: In reflecting on the Crew Dog account "Blown Tire on Take off," one cannot help but believe that Almighty God was Crew E 70's co-pilot on that fateful night. — Past Post 240 Commander, Roger Easter

Members of JFK Post 485 Honor Lance Corporal David Lee Espinoza

Story by JFK Post 485 Public Relations



Post Commander Charleen Hernandez of John F. Kennedy American Legion Post 485



Congressman Henry Cuellar

SAN ANTONIO – (Sept. 23, 2026) – Post Commander Charleen Hernandez of John F. Kennedy American Legion Post 485, joined by her granddaughter, PJ Hernandez, and others traveled to Laredo, Texas, to support the Gold Star family of David Lee Espinoza at the 5th Annual Lance Corporal David Lee Espinoza, USMC Memorial Walk held at LBJ High School, Aug. 15.

Hernandez not only participated in the walk but was invited to speak.

“I went to show my support for the family and was surprised and deeply honored to be invited to speak on behalf of The American Legion,” said Hernandez. “I shared how I first met the family while serving as commander of VFW Post 8397 and how privileged I felt to have been instrumental in renaming it Lance Corporal David Lee Espinoza VFW Post 8397.”

Other speakers included LBJ High School Principal Gilberto Cardenas, Congressman Henry Cuellar, Laredo Mayor Dr. Victor D. Treviño, Mayor Pro Tempore Gilbert Gonzalez, Webb County Judge-elect Jerry Garza, and David’s mother, Gold Star Mother Elizabeth Holguin.

Cuellar assured the family, “We will always be here with you, and we will always remember your son.”

Holguin spoke emotionally about her son’s courage at Abbey Gate, where he protected a mother and her children.

“David gave his life so that others could live,” she said. “We only ask that you speak their names and remember their legacies.”

Espinoza’s Gold Star family members Elizabeth Holguin, Victor Dominguez Sr., Angel Espinoza, Victor Dominguez Jr., and Delilah Dominguez led the walk alongside Legionnaire Guadalupe Alvarez of Post 485 and a U.S. Marine Corps veteran.

Hernandez’s granddaughter attended as a member of American Legion Auxiliary Unit 485 and VFW Auxiliary, and as chaplain of the Military Order of the Cootie Auxiliary Pup Tent 88.



Project BIG Vote Civic Academy Held at Fred Brock Post 828

Story by Legionnaire Burrell Parmer, TEXALPA

SAN ANTONIO – (Sept. 22, 2026) – Veterans must vote to make their voices heard in the political arena and millions of active-duty service members, veterans and family members have made sacrifices to protect the American Way of Life.

To assist in ensuring the community stays abreast of the voting process, the Project BIG Vote Civic Academy, a non-political event, was held at Fred Brock American Legion Post 828 hosted by Blacks in Government, San Antonio Chapter (BIG SA) in partnership with River City Chapter of Top Ladies of Distinction.

BIG SA aims to advocate for equal opportunity, eliminate racial discrimination, and empower public servants across all levels of government. The academy's theme was EDUCATE, EMPOWER & ENGAGE the Community to Vote.

The objective of the academy included:

- Understand how local, state, and federal government works
- Learn about voting rights, elections, registration, and ballot access
- Become informed about public issues and the officials who make decisions
- Develop skills for civic participation, community advocacy, and leadership
- Increase voter registration and turnout through partnerships with community organizations

"As veterans, we understand the importance of the freedoms we took an oath to defend. We also recognize that our responsibility to serve does not end when we take off our military uniforms," said Post 828 Commander Amanda Parham during opening remarks. "Here at Post 828, on San Antonio's historic eastside, we take pride in being more than just a gathering place for veterans. We strive to be a place where our community comes together, meaningful conversations take place, and partnerships are formed to make positive differences."



Fred Brock Post 828 Commander Amanda Parham delivered welcoming remarks during the Project BIG Vote Civic Academy, a non-political event, hosted by Blacks in Government, San Antonio Chapter in partnership with River City Chapter of Top Ladies of Distinction (Photo by 1st Vice Commander Vonetta Beale)



Legionnaire Billy Hill, 20th District Commander delivers the closing prayer alongside Renee Watson, Bexar County Director of Small Business & Entrepreneurship, who moderated the Project BIG Vote Civic Academy, a non-political event, hosted by Blacks in Government, San Antonio Chapter in partnership with River City Chapter of Top Ladies of Distinction (Photo by 1st Vice Commander Vonetta Beale)



L-R: Glenda Henry, Blacks in Government (BIG) San Antonio Chapter Voter Registration Chair; Renee Watson, Bexar County Director of Small Business & Entrepreneurship; Post 828 1st Vice Commander Vonetta Beale; 20th District Commander Billy Hill; Post Commander Amanda Parham; BIG SA Chapter President Myra Manyweather; San Antonio Chapter League of Women Voters President Jill Torbert; and Darius Lemelle of COPS/Metro Alliance (Photo courtesy of Post 828)

Post 593 Welcomes Honor Flight in San Antonio

Submitted by Shirley Platt, Department Historian

Honor Flight San Antonio FLT #22: Sept. 4-6, 2026

Wm. M. Randolph Post 593 (Converse, Texas) had the privilege of welcoming home Ray Barger (17-year Legion member) and Harry Wagener (19-year Legion member), two of our Legionnaires who were selected and participated in the two-day whirlwind tour of Washington, D.C.

Upon arrival each of the veterans were presented with a Quilt of Valor.

In 2025, the Honor Flight honored over 22,098 veterans, with 339,226 honored since 2005 and 37,728 on the waitlist.

Members from the Post 593 Legion Family were there for this occasion.



POW/MIA Remembrance Displays Courtesy of Post 128, Hondo TX

Submitted by Sylvia Flores, Adjutant, American Legion Hal Jones Post 128

American Legion Hal Jones Post 128 in Hondo, TX recently provided POW/MIA displays at the town's middle and high schools.

With the upcoming National POW/MIA Day of Recognition on Sep 18, 2026, the American Legion Hal Jones Post 128 worked to present a special exhibit, highlighting the distinctive elements of the Missing Man Table to local schools.

The display was composed of a table, white cloth, empty chair, single rose, lemon and salt, upside down glass, white candle, Bible, napkin and POW/MIA flags. This illustrated to everyone the symbolism linked to honoring those who have never returned home.

The display was arranged in the McDowell Middle School breezeway, revealing it to about 399 children. While setting up, Service Officer Rick Werner engaged students who were not familiar with the acronyms nor the significance of the ceremonial honors.

After explaining the symbols and importance to them, he encouraged them to discuss the topic with their families and teachers. The students responded favorably to the information and the challenge.

An identical display was set up at the Hondo High School main entrance for about 518 students to view and a smaller display at the area cemetery to honor one military member who is still considered missing in action.

American Legion Hal Jones Post 128 enjoys participating with students, teaching the importance of patriotic days and engaging them in meaningful discussions.



Post 174 Remembers Our POW/MIA

Submitted by BJ MacMillan, Past Commander, Post 174



American Legion Post 174 and VFW Post 8587 conducted a remembrance ceremony for our POW/MIA at the Georgetown Square in front of the Courthouse on September 18th at 5pm.

Past Post Commander, BJ MacMillan served as Master of Ceremonies along with Commander, John McCleskey from VFW Post 8587. Cathy Kohn, Post 174 Chaplain, began the ceremony with an invocation followed by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Specifics were given about the definition of POW/MIA, including the symbolism of the National League of Families' POW/MIA flag, the Empty Table, and the numbers of service members still missing.

The ceremony included ringing the Toll Bell for each conflict. A closing prayer ended the ceremony asking those present, to never forget our POW/MIA.



Post 12 POW/MIA Ceremony

Submitted by Kim McCarthy, Adjutant, Tyler Post 12

On Sept 18, 2026 Favre-Baldwin American Legion Post 12 in Tyler, TX held its POW/MIA ceremony, with several members and guests present.



Riders Keep the Hope Alive at Post 21's POW/MIA Recognition Sunset Ceremony

Submitted by Patricia A. Zuczek, Post 21 Adjutant

The rumble of motorcycles became the heartbeat of remembrance as the American Legion Riders joined together to make this year's annual POW/MIA Recognition Sunset Ceremony one to remember. Hosted by Holley-Riddle Post 21 and set against the peaceful banks of Stewart Creek Park in The Colony, the gathering carried a single, solemn purpose: to "Keep the Hope Alive" for the more than 80,000 American servicemen still unaccounted for in all wars.

Their arrival was not simply attendance — it was a tribute in motion.

Several Posts, some traveling over an hour to reach The Colony, formed a proud procession of motorcycles to escort the POW/MIA flag. As the audience rose in quiet respect, the Riders from Bonham Post and Squadron 283, Lake Texoma Post and Squadron 231, and Carrollton Post and Squadron 597 circled the outdoor space, their motorcycles forming a living ring of honor. Engines softened to a low growl as the Riders dismounted and lined up behind Post 283 Commander and Riders' Sgt-at-Arms Jason Wolf Laughing, ready to advance the flag with ceremony and reverence.

The moment the flag was posted, a slow salute rose from the Riders — steady, deliberate, and deeply felt. It was a gesture that spoke louder than words, reminding everyone present that remembrance is not passive; it is an active duty.

The addition of motorcycles electrified the atmosphere, especially for the youth in attendance. Wide eyed and awe struck, they watched the Riders with admiration — proof that patriotism, respect, and service can inspire across generations.

"As Riders, being a part of keeping our promise to never forget is important" said Wolf Laughing, "because we are still looking, we are still waiting, and we will never forget until they all come home."

This year's ceremony was not only memorable; it was a testament to what happens when Veterans, Riders, families, and community members stand shoulder to shoulder in honor of those who have not yet come home. "Having our American Legion Riders make the trek to stand along side us was a powerful reminder of the strength of our Legion family. The hope remains alive—and the Riders helped ensure it burns brightly."



Post 472 Honors Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans

Submitted by Natividad Corona, Post 472 Historian

On September 12, 2026, American Legion Harrisburg Post 472 in Houston, Texas, honored Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with a complimentary luncheon. This marks the third year that Post 472 has recognized these veterans for their service and sacrifice. The community came together in strong support for the program.

Distinguished guest speakers included Honorable Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia, Texas State Senator Carol Alvarado, Sally Medina who spoke on behalf of her brother Houston City Councilman Joaquin Martinez, Houston Fire Chief Thomas Munoz and U.S. Army Major General Rick Noriega (ret).

Post commander Juan Ponce De Leon served as Master of Ceremonies, joined by Service officer Jesse Salazar and Historian Nat Corona. Each veteran in attendance received a commemorative cap in appreciation of their service.



A Promise Kept at Sunset: Honoring the POW/MIA Legacy

Submitted by Patricia A. Zuczek, Post 21 Adjutant

The late-summer sun dipped low over The Colony as the community gathered for the 5th Annual POW/MIA Sunset Recognition Ceremony, presented by Holley-Riddle Post 21, held September 20th on the banks of Stewart Peninsula. The stands were filled with members of several American Legion posts, the Legion Riders, the Blue Star Mothers of America Yellow Rose Chapter TX20, and residents who came to pay their respects and stand united in remembrance.

A low rumble rose in the distance before the first notes of the ceremony even began. Twelve motorcycles, ridden by the American Legion Riders, rolled in with solemn purpose, their engines forming a steady, reverent cadence. The Riders, led by Jason Wolf Laughing, had traveled from various posts across Texas' 1st Division, assembling as one escort to bring in the POW Flag—a symbol of sacrifice, hope, and the unwavering commitment to never forget.

As the motorcycles came to a respectful halt, Scouts from Troop 226 stepped forward with disciplined precision. Commanded by Scout Aman P., the processional of eight scouts carried the United States flag, the Texas flag, and the six service flags, posting them with care and standing guard throughout the ceremony. Their presence added a powerful reminder of the next generation learning to honor those who served before them.

The ceremony blended reflection with artistry. Maya Hayes, CEO and Artistic Director of Starfire Productions, moved gracefully across the grassy area, performing a beautiful and emotional interpretive dance that held the crowd in stillness. Her movements seemed to echo the stories of those who never returned home—soft, searching, and full of heart.

The atmosphere deepened as Pilate's Light Trio from First United Methodist Church, performed three songs, including a stirring rendition of "Bring Him Home." Their harmonies drifted across the gathering, carrying with them a sense of longing, gratitude, and reverence.

Fitting words were shared by Reverend Kadah Shabazz, City Councilwoman Judy Ensweiler, and keynote speaker Brenda Reinhart, each offering heartfelt reflections that honored the sacrifices of POWs and MIAs. Their messages — rooted in faith, civic duty, and personal commitment — wove together a powerful reminder of why the community gathers each year: to remember, to honor, and to keep the promise of remembrance alive.

As the sun finally slipped below the horizon, bathing the sky in comforting tones of orange, red, and yellow, the bugler played TAPS, its solemn notes drifting across the gathering. Everyone held up lights, creating a soft, glowing field of remembrance, and the community remained united — remembering the missing, honoring the fallen, and reaffirming the promise that their sacrifice will never be forgotten.



Post 593 Quilt of Honor Recipient

Submitted by Shirley Platt, Department Historian

Karen Paris, a Legionnaire and Auxiliary member was nominated and presented with a Quilt of Valor on September 6, 2026. She served honorably in the Army from 1972 to 1994 retiring as an O-5. Her duty stations included Ft. Sill, Guatemala, Korea, Ft. Sam Houston, Ft. Lewis, Liberia, West Africa. She was part of the medical earthquake relief in Guatemala and was attached to the Military Medical Team instructing Liberia medics.

She is a dedicated 30 year Legionnaire with William M. Randolph Post 593 in Converse, TX. She has held numerous positions at the Post, District and Department level. At the Post level she served as Adjutant, 1st Vice, Commander, Judge Advocate and Color Guard. At District level she served as Adjutant and Vice Commander. And at State level she served as PR & Pubs chairman, National Security, Training and Legion College Instructor.



Post 174 Troop 1096 Scouts Earn Totin' Chip

Submitted by BJ MacMillan, Past Commander, Post 174



Troop 1096 taught their five new Scouts about the safe use of wood tools.

The SPL and ASPL set up a safety ring to teach the new Scouts about the proper use of a pocketknife, axe, and saw.

Each Scout had to demonstrate the proper use and care of each tool.

Once they completed the demonstration, the Scouts earned their Totin' Chip which allows them to carry a pocketknife and use the axe and saw.

Post 174 Pack 151 Starting the Year Right

Pack 151 did a fantastic job recruiting, gaining fifteen new Cub Scouts, and are expecting more to join!

They had a welcome back meeting with lots of games and root beer floats!

The Pack got to work at their next meeting, working with the Cubs on advancement requirements. It is going to be a great year for the Pack.



When One of Their Own Calls, JFK Post 485 Shows Up

Story by JFK Post 485 Public Relations



Right to left: Commander Charleen G. Hernandez, American Legion JFK Post 485 member Guadalupe Alvarez, and his sister Josie Resendiz

SAN ANTONIO – (Sept. 5, 2026) – Legionnaires of John F. Kennedy American Legion Post 485 provided monetary assistance to a family who needed a roof replacement for their home.

Legionnaire Guadalupe Alvarez, a member of Post 485 contacted Post Commander Charleen G. Hernandez and informed her that his sister, Josie Resendiz, needed help with a new roof.

When Hernandez arrived at the home, she walked into a yard filled with tables and items for sale in addition to seeing a blue tarp stretched across part of the roof. Resendiz and her family were having a yard sale; trying to raise money they could use towards the roof replacement themselves.

"My name is Charleen Hernandez. I'm the Commander of American Legion JFK Post 485, and we want to give you \$1,000 to help with your roof," said Hernandez, after being introduced to Resendiz by her brother.

Resendiz was overwhelmed with gratitude for the donation to her and her family from Post 485.

"You don't have to do that," she said, while hugging Hernandez.

Post 485 are here to help as much as possible Hernandez said.

It was a simple moment, but it represents something important about The American Legion.

"One of our brothers called. His family needed help and JFK Post 485 showed up," said Hernandez. "That's what being part of an American Legion Family means. We take care of our veterans, our families, and our community whenever we can."

Post 12 Shares Programs with Tyler School

Submitted by Kim McCarthy, 3rd District Commander Post 12 Adjutant

On Wednesday, Sept 16, 2026 members from American Legion Post 12 in Tyler, TX participated in an event at Bishop Thomas K. Gorman School to bring information to students on the various scholarships, Boys State, Girls State and Oratorical Programs.



3rd District 4th Annual Chili Cook-Off

The 4th Annual 3rd District Cili Cook Off was held at Laney-Gambrell American Legion Post 418 in Troup, TX on Sept 19, 2026.

There were 6 entries. 1st place went to Mike Smith of Squadron 12, Tyler, TX. It was a great day filled with lots of fun.



Texas Boys State

Submitted by Amery Vasso, Commander, Post 174

From Sunday, June 7 to Friday, June 12, my mind was solely focused on one matter: How could I make the most of my time at American Legion Texas Boys State? This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, an opportunity where I could connect with droves of like-minded young men who would challenge my abilities, and I was not planning on wasting it.

I checked in with the counselors, and then I made my way to the Jester Dormitory room I'd be staying in for the six-day period. I looked around my room, but immediately came to the realization that it was to no avail. I would scarcely be in the room: Rather, I'd be out and about the elegant UT campus, maximizing my time at TBS. Within the first 15 minutes of arriving at the camp, realizing that networking was key, I started going around, gauging what different people were looking to do, and how they were planning to achieve their goals. Quickly, I realized that many other people had a similar gameplan as me, a gameplan which I initially thought to be a surefire winner. Forced to regroup, I continued to ask around, and slowly started to build a new gameplan to earn a high-level position across the next 12 hours.

At the end of the first day, as I was gathering signatures to submit for a run at the Governor position, I had come to the realization that I was likely going to fall well short of the required 30-signature count. Reluctant to quit, but practically apprehensive of my chances, I made the switch to running for Supreme Court Justice instead. In my eyes, this was an efficient change, as it was still a state-level position, but a lot more achievable given my current situation. Quickly, I gained the 30 signatures I needed, and before I knew it, I had submitted my form for the primary election.

To say that I campaigned consistently would be an understatement. I put my heart and soul into a speech I recited in front of 500 party members, a crowd which was a size I had never seen before. And whether it was effective or not, I was relentless; I would go up to almost anyone I saw in the halls, introducing myself, and urging them to vote for me. Eventually, these efforts paid off, I performed strongly in the primary and the runoff, and I was on to the general election.

Now this was another hurdle for me to overcome. Because now, I was not just speaking in front of my own party, but rather, I was speaking in front of both. I had to make campaign speeches in multiple districts of large crowds, sometimes hostile crowds which would discourage me. However, I knew that I had to keep going; I knew that I had to make the week count. And so I did, through rowdy crowds and long days, I campaigned strongly and prevailed in the general election. I was elected to the Texas Supreme Court. I had achieved what I had set out to do in this crucial six-day period.

However, it must be said that my Texas Boys State journey was not only defined and validated by my election as Supreme Court justice, but also by the immense comradery I built amongst my fellow senators. I will forever cherish the hard-fought games of basketball we won together, the hard-fought games of dodgeball we won together, and the amazing times we shared together as a group. I formed a strong bond with the young men in my city, Moore City, in addition to the counselors, who acted as a guiding force but also as fellow teenage men we could relate to.

Texas Boys State 2026 was a truly life-altering experience. It was an experience that redefined hard work, an experience that shows the importance of true comradery and friendship, and an experience that represents the balance of work, enjoyment, and satisfaction one must strive for in life. I will forever carry the lessons I learned in this wondrous program.





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